DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 387 275 RC 020 133

TITLE	Early Childhood Education. IDRA Focus.
INSTITUTION	Intercultural Development Research Association, San Antonio, Tex.
REPORT NO	ISSN-1069-5672
PUB DATE	Apr 95
NOTE	25p.; Photographs will not reproduce adequately.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	IDRA Newsletter; v22 n4 April 1995
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Child Development; *Early Childhood Education; *Educational Environment; Educational Methods; *Elementary School Students; Limited English Speaking; Mexican American Education; *Parents as Teachers; Portfolio Assessment; *Preschool Children; School Readiness; Sex Fairness; Sex Role; *Training
IDENTIFIERS	*Developmentally Appropriate Programs; Language Minorities

ABSTRACT

This newsletter contains seven articles on developmentally appropriate and equitable practices for use in preschool and primary classrooms and at home. Examples frequently relate to Hispanic or limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. "Parents As First Teachers: Creating an Enriched Home Learning Environment" (Abelardo Villarreal) outlines what parents should do and what they should avoid in providing learning opportunities for preschool children. "Guiding Success for Preschool Age Children: An IDRA Training Program" (Abraham Dominguez, Abelardo Villarreal) describes training for teachers and caregivers in preschool classrooms that encompasses seven competency areas. "Creating Gender Equitable Early Childhood Environments: A Look at What's So--the Status of Education" (Michaela Penny-Velazquez) describes gender-biased methods still practiced in early childhood classrooms, and ways that preschool teachers can promote gender equity through appropriate materials, activities, and language usage. "Picking Pertinent Pieces from Pre-Kinder Portfolios: Pursuing Portfolios and Assessing Alternative Assessment" (Aurelio M. Montemayor) discusses portfolios as a means of implementing authentic assessment in developmentally appropriate preschool programs. "What Teachers Are Saying about Project Adelante" provides teacher comments on a program devoted to improving instruction of preschool LEP children. "What We Can Learn from the Reggio Emilia Early Childhood Program" (Abelardo Villarreal) describes an Italian program that draws on the diversity of experiences that children bring from home, and discusses program principles applicable to the preschool education of culturally and linguistically diverse students. "Computers Are for Young Children Too" (Bradley Scott) reviews "Young Children: Active Learners in a Technological Age," an anthology of 21 articles edited by June Wright and Daniel Shade. (SV)

INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

IDRA Newsletter

IDRA Focus:
Early Childhood Education

ISSN 1069-5672 Volume XXII, No. 4 April 1995

ED 387 275

Parents As First Teachers: Creating An Enriched Home Learning Environment

Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D.

By the end of the first semester of second grade, Emilio was so fed up with his performance in school that he decided to play sick every morning. His teacher blamed Emilio and his parents for his poor performance, and his parents angrily accused school personnel for the inadequate education that he was receiving. At the losing end of this dichotomy was Emilio and his future.

Unfortunately this is not uncommon. Ill-defined roles and responsibilities for school personnel and parents and an inadequate instructional program for Emilio kept his educational well-being in abeyance. Numerous articles have been written to help school personnel reform their practices to assume a more responsible role in the education of all children and, in particular, the children who speak a language other than English or who share a different culture (TEA, 1994; Díaz-Soto, 1991; Villarreal, 1993). Although schools are still struggling to become more responsive to all students, this lack of success is not always due to lack of information (Cárdenas, 1995).

Parents, on the other hand, decry the lack of access to information for them to play their part as children's first teachers (Schoonmaker, 1992). The purpose of this article is to provide school personnel with insights for use in parenting workshops on enriching learning opportunities during their children's formative years (ages three to five).

Parenting involves taking responsibility seriously, taking advantage of every opportunity to enhance children's learning, and providing children with challenges. Children absorb life experiences indiscriminately. To a large extent, these life experiences form children's character, feelings and values, and they provide the window through which they will view the world (Scott, 1992; Villarreal, 1993). In other words, through interaction with their children and the experiences that they provide them, parents can influence and guide children's growth and development.

By age five children will be exposed to school life. Parents can either provide learning experiences haphazardly or unknowingly (with good intentions, but with little knowledge and no plan) or they can conscientiously plan for quality experiences to occur and exercise their obligation in a more responsible manner. There are three major tasks that parents can do to improve the learning environment at home. These tasks are discussed below.

Task 1: Learn More About How Children Learn

Parents who have been successful in their role as the first teachers of children share a similar philosophy about children's learning. This philosophy is defined by eight key assertions about parenthood and learning (Bredekamp, 1987). The following outlines these major thoughts that are instrumental for parents to be successful as children's first teachers.

A. Children are always ready to learn.

Children have an inborn capacity to learn (Forman and Kuschrer, 1983). They start learning from the time that they are in the mother's womb. The fact that children ask many questions or are eager to touch all that they see is an expression of their readi-

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IDRA is an independent nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to improving educational opportunity. Through research, materials development, training, technical assistance, evaluation, and information dissemination, we're helping to create schools that work for all children.

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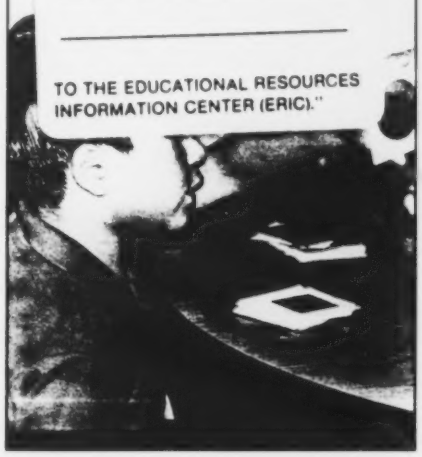

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The Intercultural Development Research Association *(IDRA)* is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity. The *IDRA Newsletter* (ISSN 1069-5672, copyright ©1995) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

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Popularized in the early 1970s by author Thomas Kuhn, "paradigms" are our models or patterns of reality, shaped by our understanding and experience into a system of rules and assumptions about the world around us. The call for restructuring in education, emerging from a profound sense that education is not working for all children, requires a transformation in how we see schools, students, and their families. If we are to find a new and equitable vision of what education can and should be, new lenses are required to change the way we look at schools and the populations in them - as demonstrated by our "Now" thinkers below.

THAT IS THEN... THIS IS NOW...

"Teaching these children is like training animals. For each task you want them to do, you must offer them a carrot."

- Quoted in "Crisis in the Classroom," by Charles E. Silkeman page 85, 1970

"I feel I pay a lot of [tax] money, and I want my child to have as much attention as she needs. I don't want to come off as a bigot either. I guess it's good old maternal instinct. You try to do the best for your kid."

- a mother who, just before her daughter started kindergarten, moved out of an area where a quarter of the students were non-English-speakers to an area where less than 10 percent of the students do not speak English. Quoted in *The Washington Post*, November 23, 1992.

"There is a sensible way of treating children. Treat them as though they were young adults...Never hug and kiss them, never let them sit in your lap...Give them a pat on the head if they have made an extraordinarily good job of a difficult task."

- J.B. Watson quoted in *Children Through the Ages: A History of Childhood*, 1978

"In the United States today – probably the most technologically advanced, affluent, and democratic society the world has ever known – the crucially formative years of early childhood have become a time of peril and loss for millions of children and their families. Now, however, there is an opportunity to prevent much of this damage."

- Quoted in "Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children," by David A. Hamburg, April 1994

"For as your local programs become more effective and pleasurable to everyone involved, so the children will succeed. And the children's success is our world's salvation. But if the children fail, woe is unto us. And all our remonstrations will be for naught."

- Mostasa quoted in "Speak to Us of Evaluation," *IDRA Newsletter*, February 1982

"...there are also many who, under one cover or another, have done essentially nothing – leaving countless children to sink or swim, and heartbreaking numbers of these youngsters are sinking."

- Secretary Shirley M. Hufstedler quoted in "The Continuing Discussion Over the *LAU* Regulations: Parents' Perspectives," *IDRA Newsletter*, November 1980

SPOTLIGHT ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IDRA challenges practices and firmly-held beliefs regarding the education of children. Instead of viewing readiness as an intrinsic, child characteristic which must be assessed to determine whether that child can benefit from certain school experiences, readiness is views as external to the child and tied to teacher beliefs. IDRA's concept of professional development is based on valuing, of self and others – it is the valuing of self and of colleagues as teachers and as adults with much to offer with a vision and a hope to make a difference in children's lives. We believe that all teachers bring strengths to the profession and that all are capable of both excellence and improvement. IDRA assists people to create educational solutions through innovative, participatory, and hands-on presentations, workshops and technical assistance that promote sustained growth and development. With this principle that encourages unity rather than uniformity, our assistance values the cultures of our participants and acknowledges their experiences.

GUIDING SUCCESS FOR PRESCHOOL AGE CHILDREN: AN IDRA TRAINING PROGRAM

Abraham Domínguez, M.Ed. and Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D.

Ms. García had just arrived at the ABC Day Care Center to begin her work as a caregiver of preschool-age children. Just three blocks away, Ms. Gómez was welcoming her preschool children at the Morales Elementary School. Both were eager to start the day, both had prepared their rooms, and neither could wait to start their first interactions with the children.

After a couple of days, a sense of frustration was evident. Their eagerness was starting to dwindle. Many incidents had occurred that, to them, were obstacles to their success as teachers and caregivers. They pondered questions like: "Why don't these children stay put? Why can't they stop talking? Why are they always asking questions? Why is it that some act nicely and others couldn't care less?" Ms. Gómez and Ms. García wondered why no one had prepared them for these surprises.

Challenging school-age children to learn, act and behave appropriately and foster their creativity is a demanding task that requires knowledge about child growth and development. Children are hungry for knowledge and seek stimulating experiences that expand their knowledge and tinker with their curiosity. Helping to develop the "whole" child – intellectually, socially, physically and psychologically – requires a set of skills that can be obtained through training and refined through experience. Hence, teachers and caregivers have the responsibility to create and manage stimulating learning environments that help to develop the whole child. Many times, teachers and caregivers expect their children to be complacent and behave. One rule of thumb to remember is that the rowdy classroom may be the children's way of clamoring for help rather than an expression of misbehavior. An important responsibility of the teacher and caregiver is to turn these "expressions of misbehavior" into learning experiences.

The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) has worked with teachers and caregivers by providing training in developmentally appropriate practices. Our training is based on a model that recognizes the collective role of the day care center or school administrator and of the caregiver or teacher in maximizing learning opportunities for children. The chart below depicts how juxtaposing those forces that are generated and managed by the administrator and the behaviors and characteristics of teachers creates the conditions for effective learning experiences for children. IDRA's training approach is comprehensive and addresses the needs of the administrator and caregiver or teacher.

This article provides a list of principles that guide IDRA's training, and it describes a comprehensive training program that complements the change model described in the chart.

Principles of Effective Training

Principles are guideposts that undergird an approach or a set of activities. IDRA has defined these principles and uses them as criteria for evaluating our training sessions. These principles are based on what the literature shows works and has a positive impact on the participants' responsibilities as administrators or caregivers and teachers. The principles include:

- Training must be focused and address specific problem areas, such as learning centers or inappropriate behaviors.
- Training must be perceived as a means to an end to improve children's learning.
- Training must acknowledge existing capabilities – participants have participated in training sessions and are already doing something in their classrooms.
- Training must stress the ability to solve problems and issues that pertain to specific centers or schools.
- Training must stress the power of collab-

Guiding Success - continued on page 4

MODEL FOR EFFECTING CHANGE IN A DAY CARE CENTER OR PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM

Center or School		Caregivers or Teachers		
• Support • Expectations • Leadership • Recognition • Adequacy of resources • Clear vision and goals • Linkages with social agencies and community	+	• Attitudes • Expectation • Developmentally appropriate practices • Knowledge • Parent partners	=	**Effective Services to *All* Children**

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oration and collegiality in solving problems and learning from each other.

- Training must acknowledge the power of attitudes in making or not making a difference.
- Training must have a balance of theory and "hands-on" activities. In fact, training must integrate theory into the "hands-on" activities.

The IDRA Training Program for Administrators

The administrator has many roles that directly relate to the quality of the services that are provided to children. The key roles that administrators play revolve around those forces that facilitate equity and excellence in services. These are defined as follows:

- *Support* can be defined as (1) providing the necessary resources to caregivers and teachers to do their job, (2) mentoring caregivers and teachers to assist them in making the "right" decisions, and (3) providing the human resources to assist in the classroom.
- *Expectations* refers to administrators' perceptions about personnel and their capabilities to meet the demands of the job. Believing in teachers and caregivers and communicating this belief can strengthen their commitment to do the "best" job.
- *Leadership* refers to the administrator's ability to generate and sell ideas to teachers and caregivers. Leaders have followers. Leadership can be a force that pulls people to form "cadres" that support and meet goals in a more timely manner.
- *Recognition* refers to the ability of the day care center or school to value and communicate the efforts of individuals in meeting their responsibilities as caregivers or teachers.
- *Adequacy of resources* is defined as all timely resources that adequately meet the needs of personnel in meeting their job responsibilities.
- *Clear vision* refers to the ability of the day care center or school to articulate its goals, objectives and vision of what the children will be able to accomplish.
- *Linkages with social agencies* refers to a successful working relationship with social agencies that provide relevant health and safety services to children.

Training for administrators provides the support for them to be able to generate these facilitating forces. IDRA's program consists of 10 three-hour training sessions that focus on the following: assisting staff in the development of self-improvement plans, understanding the role of board members in child care programs, becoming a leader and an advocate for early childhood programs, comprehensive and effective interview procedures, creating teams that plan and implement effective change, communicating effectively with staff and clients, and conducting employee assessment conferences.

The IDRA Training Program for Teachers and Caregivers

The training program for teachers and caregivers is defined along the lines of competency areas that are critical in meeting the needs of effective teachers and caregivers (see box this page). These competency areas address different facets of the learning environment and prepare teachers and caregivers with a comprehensive set of skills and

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The IDRA Training Program for Teachers and Caregivers

Competency Area: Developmentally Appropriate Practices

- Tips to knowing what developmentally appropriate practices mean
- Finding out if existing practices meet criteria for developmentally appropriate programs
- Designing developmentally appropriate environments – reviewing and developing layouts

Competency Area: Guidance Techniques

- Understanding and addressing inappropriate behavior – guidance basics
- Diagnosing and analyzing inappropriate behavior – its roots, symptoms and solutions
- Creating a learning environment that promotes friendships, cooperation and effective discipline

Competency Area: Family Culture and Individual Diversity

- Why knowing about children's first language and cultural background is important
- Learning about stereotypes and how they affect the quality of child care
- Creating learning environments that value and respect language and cultural diversity

Competency Area: Learning Centers

- Knowing what learning centers are and why they are important – a challenging experience for caregivers and teachers
- Creating learning centers – layout and materials
- Managing the movement of children in a learning center environment

Competency Area: Physical and Intellectual Growth

- Learning the role of the first language in promoting intellectual growth
- Ideas on how to develop language in children
- Creating experiences that develop language in children – constructing instructional activities and manipulatives
- Learning about math concepts – what are they and in what sequence are they developed
- Learning about materials and activities that teach mathematics concepts
- Constructing materials and manipulatives that teach mathematics concepts

Competency Area: Family Relationship Workshops

- Learning about the importance of teaming with parents – outreach strategies
- Keeping parents aware of program requirements – an update
- Developing parent advocates for children's rights

Competency Area: Health and Safety

- What is a healthy and safe environment? Knowing the basics
- Finding out whether an environment is healthy and safe – a "hands-on" approach
- Improving your playground image – learning about easy-to-build playground equipment

Creating Gender Equitable Early Childhood Environments:
A Look at What's So – The Status of Education

Michaela Penny-Velázquez, M.A.

According to the American Association of University Women's (AAUW) report, *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America: A Call to Action*, recent statistics indicate that by the year 2000, 66 percent of the new entrants to the work force and 47 percent of the entire labor force will be women (1991). There is a demand for well-educated, highly skilled workers in our economy, particularly in the fields of science, engineering and mathematics. Our educational system needs to prepare today's youth for tomorrow's economic demands. Unfortunately, the system is not doing enough to ensure that *all* students experience academic success, self-assurance, self-reliance and self-confidence.

What happens in classrooms all too often is gender bias. Bias can be subtle, and yet it pervades the very climate of classrooms from early childhood through college years. It includes the signals that are consciously or unconsciously communicated to both girls and boys about what is expected of them. Males and females clearly are treated differently throughout their educational careers to the detriment of either sex's development. Bias effects how they are taught and how they are tracked in the direction of their schooling paths and ultimately in their career paths as well.

The research is replete with indications of gender bias in classrooms all across the country. Most teachers are not aware that this kind of bias is prevalent in their classrooms. An ultimate goal of education should be to create classroom environments where children may grow to their potential without barriers because of their gender. While teachers at any level can be trained in their awareness and bringing about conscious change to their gender biases and ingrained attitudes, the place to begin, as always, is in the early childhood classrooms and early primary years.

The Case for Early Intervention

Early childhood education gives young children the opportunity to explore their world view beyond themselves, their families and their communities. An appropriate early learning environment allows children the freedom to become comfortable with the world around them and to expand their place in it. It is here where children are more formally socialized and exposed to societal expectations including sex-role socialization, norms, standards and conventional rules. This is when children are defining themselves and their identity, including their sex-role identification.

Developing one's identity, including gender identity, is a serious and important feat for young children. Observers of young children can notice them "try on" their interpretations of sex role stereotypes. One view is that when children first learn the distinctions between masculine and feminine behavior, they often overgenerlize these differences much like they would in language when they initially learn a rule and overuse it. Often they base their behavior and that of others on rather rigid outer influences and expectations for boys and girls. Much of what occurs in early childhood is self-imposed sex segregation. One researcher observes: "Kindergarten is a triumph of sexual self-stereotyping... They think they have invented the differences between boys and girls and, as with any new invention, must prove that it works" (Paley, 1984).

While researchers continue to ask whether the differences between male and female behaviors are innate or are caused by early socialization, educators clearly can make a difference with young children. They can become increasingly more aware of how their own views of sexism or sex-role stereotypes influence what happens in classrooms and how their influence shapes the lives of young children. Selma Greenberg warns, "If we accept the verdict of both lay and professional persons that the early childhood years are not only important in themselves but that their effects have lifelong impact, we must view seriously what children do during these years and perhaps view even more seriously what they do not do or avoid doing" (1985).

What is Happening in Early Childhood Classrooms

As I visit hundreds of early childhood classrooms, I notice how learning environments are arranged, who participates in which learning activities, what takes place in the environment, and how the teacher interacts and facilitates young children's work and play. What I often observe are typical learning centers such as the home center, block area, art center, discovery/science center, and manipulatives/game area. Typically girls are playing "house" in the home/dramatic play center and boys are constructing in the block center. Little girls are "reading" books in the library corner and creating "masterpieces" in the art center. Pictures and posters displayed on the walls often illustrate sex role stereotypes, particularly during units on community helpers where females are portrayed as nurses, teachers, secretaries and hairdressers, and males are portrayed as mailmen, firemen, policemen and doctors.

Given opportunities to dramatize these roles, boys will act out the more aggressive and protective roles of the "male" and girls will take on a decidely more passive role of the "female." Colors such as pink and blue still separate boys from girls. Science centers may have plants, a few animals, and a magnifying glass to view some decaying object – all too often not a very inviting place after the initial novelty wears off.

The most alarming observation is that teachers often allow children "free time" in the learning centers with little or no adult interaction and facilitation with children at work and play in the centers. Sometimes, I will observe a teacher with one small group and a paraprofessional with another group, often conducting an art project, while a third group is "free" to explore in the learning centers that have been stocked with the same equipment since the beginning of the school year. Selections of children's literature all too often perpetuate sex-role stereotypes and biases.

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Creating Gender Equitable - continued from page 5

Creating Gender Equitable Early Childhood Environments

Teachers can make a difference in shaping the futures of young children and begin preparing them for the economic demands of tomorrow. However, in order to meet the growing demands to prepare all students, it is important to raise awareness about gender equity as promptly as in the early childhood classroom. After careful examination of one's own biases, prejudices and beliefs, it is then important to move from awareness into action – creating classrooms that are equitable and reflect diversity. While young children who are behaving in sex stereotypical ways are naturally responding to a developmental need of establishing their sexual identity, one can counter this self-imposed sexism in the early childhood environment by paying attention to several factors – the environment, curricular activities, curricular materials, teachers as facilitators and language usage. Let us examine each of these areas.

Environment

The first place to begin is to notice how equitable the early learning environment is. Teachers are architects of the learning environment, designing both the physical environment and the curricular materials and activities within the environment. In critically looking at the environment for gender equity, teachers can ask themselves the questions in the box below.

Curricular Activities

It is significant to note the importance of encouraging young girls to participate in the block center and the discovery and math manipulative center. Research states that boys often have first-hand experience from early on with activities requiring spatial relations such as building with blocks, tinkering with gears and levers and fixing things. All too often, girls are not encouraged to develop these skills from early on in life and thus are missing out on some basic concepts and first hand experience that will assist them later in physics and other math and physical science courses. To ensure that both males and females play in the block center, teachers can expand children's play options and their awareness of gender roles. Instead of just having blocks in the center, teachers can place items such as zoo animals, farm animals, trees and park materials, cars, trucks, and other modes of transportation, and other objects that may reflect the current theme or unit of study. Teachers can include pictures or photographs of both genders actively building and constructing, including classroom photographs of children playing in the block center. Additionally, teachers can increase children's literacy awareness by including books or magazines that illustrate different building structures, homes, skyscrapers, etc. Children can peruse the pictures in the books and use them as models for their own constructions.

In addition, it is important to encourage both genders to play in the dramatic play area. Oftentimes, the dramatic play center contains only "home" equipment such as stoves, refrigerators, tables, costumes for dress up, and baby doll paraphernalia. While this is appropriate for units of study on home, family and self, the dramatic play area offers many more opportunities for young children to actively play and dramatize their interpretation of the world around them. The dramatic play area can be transformed to reflect any theme or unit of study.

Louise Derman-Sparks, in her book, *Anti-Bias Curriculum*, provides many guidelines and specific activities that help children see more equitable gender roles. For example, teachers can "put the woodworking table and tools into the 'house' for making home repairs as well as wood constructions: put a typewriter, adding machine and other materials in a 'study'; put the block area next to the dramatic play area for building work places (a market, a hospital, a gas station with mechanics)" (1989).

Another area to investigate is the discovery or science center. While teachers may include activities that reflect the natural and biological sciences, physical science is often neglected. Barbara Sprung, author of *Early Childhood and the Physical Sciences*, states, "Physical science belongs in the curriculum because it is as essential a building block of future knowledge as is language, math, social studies, natural science, music, art and physical education" (1989). Here too, it is important to emphasize that *science is for everyone* and that no one group is excluded due to societal stereotypes. Children at this age are naturally curious about the world around them including the natural sciences – physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, technology and machinery. These are not just male domains. Teachers can capitalize on children's natural inquisitiveness by introducing activities and materials that allow children first-hand experience with the natural sciences.

Creating Gender Equitable - continued on page 7

Checklist for An Equitable Environment

- How are learning centers arranged in the classroom?
- Are "quiet" and "noisy" centers separated?
- How inviting are the activities and materials in the learning centers?
- Do they interest both males and females?
- Are the materials and activities within the centers changed periodically or do they remain the same throughout the year?
- Do the learning centers reflect a theme or unit of study?
- Do the activities and materials reflect sex stereotypical roles?
- Do these activities limit, stress or stretch young children?
- Do pictures, rebuses, posters and other wall hangings in the environment reflect a balanced picture of education for both genders?
- Are these pictures portraying stereotyped images of either sex (i.e., male doctors, female nurses, male construction workers, female teachers or secretaries, male fire fighters and police officers)?
- Are the pictures and displays reflecting subtle or less obvious stereotypes (i.e., pictures of women with children, men with adults, girls in passive postures, boys in adventurous, aggressive or leadership roles)?
- Are there pictures or posters that display both girls and boys in science and math activities, cooking activities, art and literature?
- Do these pictures, displays and posters reflect different ethnic groups? Are they reflected in positive images?
- Are there centers or activities in the classroom in which boys and girls naturally segregate themselves? Which activities draw the attention of one sex over the other?
- Who plays where and with whom?

Creating Gender Equitable - continued from page 6

Curricular Materials

Once teachers have critically scrutinized the physical environment and the materials and activities within it, the next step is to evaluate the books and other curricular materials. While much of the curricular materials in an early childhood classroom are contained in learning center activities, there are other materials that teachers constantly use that also send messages to children about sex role stereotypes. The most noted are the storybooks teachers share with young children daily. Oftentimes, children's literature is replete with gender stereotypes, portraying young boys as adventurous, courageous, aggressive and intelligent, while young girls are portrayed as passive bystanders, in loving and nurturing postures. It is important for educators to not only evaluate children's literature for biases, gender and ethnic, but also to share books that reflect other gender images, i.e., female heroines, boys in nurturing roles, and children in non-traditional roles.

Teachers as Facilitators

One of the most important roles of the early childhood educator is that of facilitator. Facilitation is a very skilled art. Just designing the early childhood environment and letting children freely roam and experience the multitude of activities within the environment is not enough. Facilitators actively and purposely observe young children at play and guide and intervene with questions that stretch young children's thinking skills. This is an opportunity to model the appropriate uses of materials and activities within the environment as well as an opportunity to step into the child's world to ask questions to ascertain their views. By stepping into the child's world, the teacher can facilitate children's thinking and challenge their already formed stereotypes and biases as well as stretch their higher level thinking skills. Facilitators become quite skilled at the art of forming and asking questions that stimulate children's thinking and expand their limited viewpoints.

Language Usage

Perhaps one of the more difficult teacher behaviors to change is that of language use and attitudes. This can be both nonverbal signals or inadvertent phrases and statements that may convey biases and prejudices. What is important to note is that teachers' language use is a very powerful and sometimes subtle way of defining the world to children and their place in it. Once teachers pay careful attention to the habitual language they use and begin to alter their language, they become better models for children. For instance, teachers can substitute the words mail carrier for mailman, police officer for policeman, fire fighter for fireman, humanity for mankind, nurturing for mothering, business person for businessman, etc. Teachers need to look at their over usage of the term "he" and instead substitute "she" from time to time. Instead of referring to all of the children as "guys" as in, "Look up here you guys" or "Come on guys," teachers can refer to the group collectively by saying, "I need for all of you to look up here," or "Come on everyone." The collective term, "guys" sends subtle messages to both boys and girls. Our English language is replete with masculine terms, but it is important for teachers to adjust their language use to include both genders equitably. While sometimes an arduous and tedious task at first, the benefits of shifting language use will make a significant difference in how children view themselves in the world and their place in it.

In addition to altering the language teachers use with young children, it is important to encourage their talents and abilities regardless of gender. M.C. Linn and A.C. Peterson describe equity as "freedom for both sexes to choose school and career activities without social censure" (1985).

An important area is to increase girls' motivation and interest in science and math by promoting their appreciation of these subject areas. One way to accomplish this in the early childhood classroom is to refer to the young girls as "scientists" and "mathematicians" while they are engaged in activities within the learning centers. For instance, when you notice girls mixing and concocting substances in the discovery center, state observations such as, "I can see you chemists are experimenting with oil and water. What do you think a chemist would notice about oil and water?" When studying units on space, have both males and females see themselves as astronauts and mission specialists. Encourage both genders to explore what it would be like to go on a space voyage. Both girls and boys will benefit from exposure not only to non-bias language but also to career exploration that goes beyond the traditional community helpers unit. The important thing is to help children see themselves in various roles that promote the use of science and math skills and concepts. By helping children make the connections with the real world and the relevance of these activities to real life situations, teachers can open up a whole new world of possibilities to children that otherwise might not be available to them within the confines of social sex role stereotypes.

Early childhood teachers play a paramount role in shaping the future of young children. By becoming cognizant of their behavior with either gender, noticing their own expectations for each sex, and providing more equitable opportunities for both boys and girls, each child is encouraged to reach his or her full potential and become better prepared to meet the challenges and demands of the future labor force.

Resources

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Creating Gender Equitable - continued on page 11

SPOTLIGHT ON ASSESSMENT

Like other children, students whose first language is other than English bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to school. But historically, standardized tests have provided little or no useful information about these students' language or cognitive abilities. The use of assessment and testing data has too often been limited to holding students accountable, offering little or no help to guide improvement efforts or foster collective accountability. IDRA works with all parties that have a vested interest in the educational outcomes produced by the schools – the students, the educational practitioners, the families and the broader community – to use data to frame solutions, monitor progress *and* hold all of the participants involved in the educational process accountable for the end results. IDRA is helping schools find solutions to traditional methods of testing and assessment, enabling students from diverse backgrounds to become empowered learners.

PICKING PERTINENT PIECES FROM PRE-KINDER PORTFOLIOS:

PURSUING PORTFOLIOS AND ASSESSING ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT

Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.

"Prepare a workshop on portfolios for early childhood education" the note said. Me? I'm more secondary and instruction rather than elementary and evaluation. But, I'm committed to keeping our organization's commitments, so here goes. I dive into the archives of the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) and find a section labelled "Portfolio on Alternative Assessment" – a ponderous portfolio replete with the kinds of materials that IDRA has been using in workshops and presentations over the last 20 years: books, articles, newsletters, task sheets, student samples, transparencies, audio-tapes, photographs and even videotapes. I lay everything out on a large table and begin to select what I will need, using a broad outline that helps me divide the materials into categories: *Assessment – general readings and definition; Emergent literacy; State agency recommendations; Appropriate assessment; Portfolios – definitions. Doing it in the classroom; Conditions for adoption; Benefits; Staff development; What the classroom looks like; and Sample children's portfolios.*

Assessment – General Readings and Definition

First, I find out what has been written about portfolios. IDRA founder and director emeritus, Dr. José A. Cárdenas wrote this on the subject: "Alternative ways of assessing mental abilities must be identified that will probably have to differ from past practices. Psychometricians have gone so far up the wrong creek in the assessment of minority mental abilities that it is wise to heed the National Education Association's recommendation that all intelligence testing of minority children be suspended until alternative ways may be explored" (1995).

Dr. Albert Cortez, director of the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership, wrote, "If assessment and evaluation are to keep pace with the research in the field, we must also reframe our focus and not ask old questions in new ways but proceed with the framing of new questions, using processes that are more inclusive and provide data that helps schools make a difference for children" (1995).

Deborah Meier discussed assessment in early childhood education specifically: "Early childhood education seeks to emphasize words, concepts and reading material that will help a child sort out the here and now, that will provide continuity between [the child's] preschool learning and school learning, between the different parts of [the child's] own life and environment. It stretches out beyond the world of intimacy only slowly, as experience, interests and needs widen…Standardized tests are rigged against the nature of thinking of all young children…A seven-year-old child, still engaged in 'pre-operational' thinking, or at most, in what Jean Piaget has described as 'early concrete operational thinking,' is simply not in the same world as the adults who fashion such tests" (1972).

From these readings, I then get the definition of assessment: "The process of observing, recording and otherwise documenting the work children do and how they do it as a basis for a variety of educational decisions that affect the child" (NAEYC and NAECS, 1991).

Emergent Literacy

Since I will focus on early childhood education, I read about my colleague's work in emergent literacy and portfolios. IDRA senior education associate, Michaela Penny-Velázquez, explains: "Young children learn through interacting and playing with materials, objects and people surrounding them. They are shaped by the many encounters they experience each day. Teachers play a critical role as architects and designers of the learning environment. For optimal learning, they must create a space that encourages and supports the kinds of play that are young children's primary avenue to growth and development."

She continues, "For classrooms with second language learners, it is a good idea to observe children interacting with one anoth-

Pre-kinder Portfolios *- continued on page 9*

Transparency #1

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

TASK FORCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

For Campuses:

1. Refrain from the use of letter grades during early childhood and elementary years. Assess children's progress toward established performance standards through teacher observation narratives, checklists and portfolios containing samples of children's work. Develop a structured method of communicating children's progress to parents.
2. Conduct conferences with parents and children to communicate children's progress and to solicit parents' expertise in making decisions regarding placement and referral.

Pre-kinder Portfolios - continued from page 8

er and record natural language samples of children's speech. These samples should include verbatim recordings of the child's natural language production that are dated and maintained in portfolio folders for future comparison and analysis" (1994).

State Agency Recommendations

Next I pull together some overhead transparencies to use in my workshop. The first will highlight state agency recommendations on the use of letter grades and parent conferences (see box on page 8).

Appropriate Assessment

The second transparency will compare traditional assessment with performance assessment. Transparencies Three and Four will address appropriate assessment and strategies (see box this page).

Portfolios – Definitions

Next, I will need to define a portfolio. IDRA senior education associate, Dr. Adela Solís tells me that a portfolio involves collecting samples of student's work and experiences that reflect through the things they do and say the ways in which they think. She continues, "Teachers that have paid attention to the process of learning as well as to the products of that learning evident in the portfolio collection can collaboratively assess the students' abilities, skills and knowledge to accurately evaluate whether or not their teaching is preparing the students for the real world" (1993).

Ann Arbor Public Schools also offers a definition: "A portfolio is a collection of student produced work and support documentation that shows evidence of a student's learning. A portfolio reflects a student's development and progress over time on a variety of concepts, processes, skills and attitudes" (1993).

Doing it in the Classroom

After that, I interview Abraham Domínguez, IDRA education specialist, on introducing portfolios in the early childhood classroom. Here are some of the things he said:

"If you don't understand developmentally appropriate practices, you will have trouble understanding portfolios and their role in assessment. Piaget is very specific but can be difficult to understand. My best learning has come from individuals who guided me to observe children and observe how they grow and develop, from experienced teachers that modeled appropriate instruction. That is what I do with my teachers. Piaget's theory is just an *observation* of what children do naturally...of how children learn. Schools are forcing children to learn unnaturally.

"Right now I'm working with approximately 45 classrooms, and at least 30 of those are developmentally appropriate. These are teachers that I work with at least once a month. The complete change within the classroom can happen within 24 hours, as it did with one teacher, or it can take four months, as with a teacher who took longer to see, understand, accept and then actually try out the new ways. This was four months of my being there once a week.

"Many teachers feel that they really don't understand the process of curriculum, assessment and theory pertaining to these children. Most teachers have only had one

Pre-kinder Portfolios - continued on page 10

Transparency #2

Traditional Assessment	Performance Assessment
Takes snapshots of the student's performance; highly susceptible to day-to-day variations in behavior and interest.	Portfolios grow with the student; checklists show progress; presents longitudinal picture
Isolated activity; disrupts instruction	Ongoing process; not intrusive to instruction
Age and grade important variables	Assessment organized around individual student; indicates learning needs
Limited ability to measure progress in all developmental domains	Checklists can include outcomes in all academic, social and physical domains
Test design provides limited assessment of thinking and communication	Able to assess higher-order thinking, communication skills, and problem solving
Drives local curriculum to take the form of narrow, isolated tasks	Draws upon local curriculum objectives and outcome standards

Source: Texas Education Agency, 1993.

Transparency #3

Key Outcomes:	*What is to be learned*
Assessment Strategies:	*How are you going to collect information about student performance?*
Performance Indicators:	*What is the criteria or standard that defines acceptable performance?*

Source: Ann Arbor Public Schools, 1993.

Transparency #4

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES
Interviews
Observations
Portfolios

STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT
Performance Tasks
Student Writing

Source: Ann Arbor Public Schools, 1993.

Pre-kinder Portfolios - *continued from page 10*

course in early childhood development, and many have been teaching at the upper grades. They have to reassess their view of the nature of learning and developmental theory. When teachers of young children understand how children think and how children grow and learn, then they can, as a group, establish some benchmarks and indicators of children's progress. Once they've decided on the benchmarks, they see a clear picture and have an 'ah ha' experience. This is what we're trying to measure.

"In the traditional system, the report card requires a letter. 'Knows readiness skills?' The teacher gives the child an 'S' for satisfactory. Another teacher's letter might be completely different. But in a portfolio you see what the child has done throughout the year. The child has done inventive spelling, documenting dictations of what he has drawn. There is proof of reading readiness skills for this child while other children that are still at the 'making marks' stage. The portfolio gives you better information to make a judgment. The portfolio gives you much more solid basis for assessing growth and if need be, giving a letter grade.

"Some of my teachers are developing portfolios on emerging literacy, showing the different stages a child is going through to become literate. In this process, the child actually answers his or her own questions: 'Where am I?' 'Why am I scribbling?' The child continues to make sense of his or her own world at this very egocentric stage. Children cannot see things from an adult's point of view. The assessment has to be relevant to how they see the world, and traditional testing has had little to do with how they see the world.

"If I want to assess the child's ability to quantify or use numbers, it has to be through observation of a hands-on activity where I process how he or she gets the answer. Rather than ask a direct question about numbers, I ask the child more general questions and, in the process, see whether or not the child responds with concepts of numbers. If a learning center is well designed and has number problems to be resolved, and if the child is ready, he or she will solve the problem.

"If you want to have a portfolio that reflects what the child is showing about number sense, you take a picture reflecting that. The child builds an elaborate three dimensional block structure. I capitalize on that opportunity I see and hear that the child understands geometric shapes because he or she told me, 'The barn is a square.' Always have a camera in the classroom. Capture those moments that visually illustrate those things that are hard to assess, such as play with blocks, because those are things you can't put in a portfolio. A photograph is a much more graphic representation of the skill demonstrated by the child than a teacher's note or checklist, as audiotapes of the children reading are much better documentation of a child's reading skills than are any written comments. You might use the camera three times in one week.

> ***THE ASSESSMENT HAS TO BE RELEVANT TO HOW [YOUNG CHILDREN] SEE THE WORLD, AND TRADITIONAL TESTING HAS HAD LITTLE TO DO WITH HOW THEY SEE THE WORLD.***

"These processes seem unwieldy in contrast to a list easily checked off, yet they yield rich information. Eventually this approach becomes a natural process for the teacher. He or she might assess five children in one day…looking for and capturing those moments when the children are demonstrating their understanding of the world around them through actions, words and products.

"Assessing in this context is not about judging right or wrong, but capturing those beautiful moments when the child is reflecting what he or she has discovered, learned, can do, manipulates, etc. You are constantly enhancing the self-concept of the child to accelerate the learning process. We are documenting growth rather than correctness. If the self concept is very strong, the child is going to succeed.

"We have successfully integrated this developmentally appropriate philosophy into a public school system that is skill based and has a defined set of 'essential elements' – things that must be learned and demonstrated eventually in a paper and pencil test. What we've done is take the list of essential elements, we've identified all those that relate to particular activities, such as 'playing with blocks,' and we've put them on one sheet. So that at the block center, the teacher can observe the children playing with blocks and identify those skills from the list that the child is successfully demonstrating.

"Before I had conducted staff development, modeling and coaching, I would ask teachers 'Tell me what skill you are teaching in the dramatic play.' They would flip through their lesson plan book, and they couldn't tell me. The learning centers were just being used as rewards. We discovered play wasn't being considered real learning, and artificial distinctions made by adults were blocking the teacher's ability to see the discoveries and explorations of the children in the activities we label 'play' in contrast to 'real lessons.' They considered seat-work and taking dictation as the real work, but now they can see clearly that their children are learning more powerfully through play."

Conditions for Adoption

Abraham Dominguez directs me to a list of IDRA's four conditions for creating a developmentally appropriate campus (notes for negotiating with the principal).

1. Begin with a core group of willing participants, teachers that actually want to do it without coercion;
2. Allow teachers to observe in classrooms where we have already worked with teachers and where a developmentally appropriate environment and portfolios are being effectively used;
3. Agree to extended technical assistance through observations, modeling instruction in the classroom by the consultant, debriefing, follow-up and problem-solving sessions, and even classroom redesign and physical re-arrangement; and
4. Allow teachers to design their own system during the staff development and technical assistance process. The result is great ownership of the process with the assurance it is based on solid pedagogy and modeling.

The process *starts* with a small group of willing participants, *respects* those teachers that don't wish to participate, *provides* theory and practice in the safe environment of a workshop, *follows-up* through technical assistance in the classroom, *supports* the teachers in adapting their classrooms and using the new concepts, *encourages* experimentation and risk taking, and *builds* peer leadership as skilled practitioners become campus models.

Benefits

I also gather four points that will help convince principals.

a. The state education agency is strongly recommending this and has published detailed guidelines;

Pre-kinder Portfolios - *continued on page 11*

COMPUTERIZED STUDENT RECORD AND ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Student Information	Family Information	Emergencies	Special Services
Health/ Medical	Intellectual Behaviors	Standardized Tests	Listening
Reading	Reading Sample	Speaking	Speaking Sample
Writing Sample	Handwriting	Teacher's Remarks	Principal/ Counselor

Pre-kinder Portfolios - *continued from page 10*

b. Teachers get enthused when observing this elsewhere and get deeply committed when they apply it with their children;
c. The children are increasingly interested in school, and the evidence of the growth and development is powerfully evident in their portfolios; and
d. Parents are more active, informed partners in the education of their children.

Staff Development

I gather some polaroid pictures of Abraham conducting staff development. One shows Abraham seated at a round table with five teachers, with samples of portfolio materials spread out on the table. I also have a picture of *Head Start* staff development with IDRA senior staff associate, Bradley Scott, working with a group of Head Start teachers from south Texas.

What the Classroom Looks Like

Next, I will show the newly revised video tape, "*Yo Escribo*: Emergent Literacy for Young Writers," developed by IDRA senior education associate, Michaela Penny-Velázquez (see Page 5).

Sample Children's Portfolio's

Of course, I will want to show a sample portfolio. I have one that is made up of two stapled manila folders decorated on the outside with a drawing by the child and her name María. Inside, a computer-generated sheet has the picture of the child smiling, her name and a printed statement: *Mi vida es hermosa y bonita. Mi vida es salir de pasco y jugar a la pelota. Yo tengo siete años.* (My life is beautiful and pretty. My life is going out on a trip and playing ball. I am seven years old.)

The other contents include: a checklist of books read with two listed by the student; assorted teacher checklists on emergent literacy, math and science; two written responses to questions about a book he read; a booklet created by the student from cut and paste figures, added original illustrations with student created narration with attached notes giving reasons for what was selected; two student drawings with attached notes giving reasons for what was selected; a one-page book report that includes a detailed drawing at the bottom; an audiotape of the child talking about a books he read; and a picture of the child at a block center and another at the cooking center.

Print Copy of Computer Screens

I also have found a printed copy of a school district's computerized student record and assessment system including pictures, drawings and audio-recordings. Each child has a file with vital information and detailed information about his or her intellectual, listening, speaking, reading and writing characteristics. These files are is used to document the cumulative the progress.

These materials suffice. I'm ready to prepare my workshop. All I have to do is determine my participants' needs related to portfolios, write the objectives and agenda, design participatory activities using the materials I've selected, have all the handouts copied, and I'm ready to start.

"Good morning early childhood educators. Today's topic is Pursuing Pre-Kinder Portfolios. We will review current thoughts on the assessment of young children, clarify the relationship of authentic assessment to developmentally appropriate instruction, locate and define portfolios in the context of authentic assessment, experience the use of portfolios with learning centers, and identify the next steps in adopting these innovations on your campus..."

Resources

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Creating Gender Equitable - *continued from page 7*

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Michaela Penny-Velázquez is a senior education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development.

REFLECTIONS

WHAT TEACHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT PROJECT ADELANTE

Editor's Note: The following is the text of an interview conducted by IDRA research assistant Aurora Yáñez-Pérez. The San Antonio area teachers interviewed have been participants in the IDRA Project Adelante. They are: Mary Rose Trinidad of Lamar Park Elementary, Elizabeth Turner of Thornton Elementary, Maria Northrupe of Northside Pre-kindergarten Center, and Margarita Reyes also of Northside Pre-kindergarten Center.

How has the IDRA early childhood training affected you?

Ms. Trinidad: "It has changed me totally. I used to be a very traditional teacher...a ditto queen. I thought I had to do worksheets. I used to ring bells: one to stand up, one to move. When I got into the [IDRA] training, I thought there was something else for the children, something better. It has made a difference in my children. It has made a difference in myself."

Ms. Reyes: "It has helped tremendously, from re-arranging my room to just giving us a whole new path to teaching pre-kinder through the *Project Adelante*. Now it is less structured, and the children are more able to make choices. It has been very difficult to change, but it has been good. Also, we have been able to learn from other teachers that have adapted to it faster. We have learned from them because we kept seeing [that] it works."

Ms. Northrupe: "For me it has been a complete revolution. I feel like I am not the same person. I have changed so radically, and I feel that I am still in the process of 'becoming.' Mr. Domínguez has revolutionized our way of thinking and our way of doing our work. It has been a slow gradual process because change doesn't come easy. I was so used to doing things a different way that it was very hard for me to even begin to think about changing. It was very hard to convince myself, and then, to convince my assistant because she kept saying: 'No, no, this is not going to work. Look how awful it is. Look how they are misbehaving. Look how noisy this room is.' Finally...I began to realize intellectually that what [Mr. Domínguez] was saying made sense. What really convinced me was during the April convention [*IDRA La Semana del Niño*, 1994] when the people from TEA came and told us the same things that Mr. Domínguez had been trying to tell us for years.

"Now [my classroom] is not teacher-directed like it was before when I was in complete control. Now the children have choices, and I let them have input on what we are going to do. The structure I had before limited me, and I didn't realize it. Now I feel so free, and I feel like I can do almost anything. I have learned a lot myself because of the children and their interests. It just makes it so much more exciting. Teaching has taken a whole new meaning for me."

What impact have you seen in the children?

Ms. Trinidad: "The children are allowed to express themselves. They can communicate with each other. They can communicate with me. The language they are developing is out of this world. I have children [who] are writing sentences already, and I would not have had that the other way, because I was telling them what to do instead of letting them decide. I didn't let them grow on their own."

Ms. Northrupe: "I am finding that the more I let go, the more the children are showing me how capable they are of doing things. They are so independent it is unreal. They are capable of doing so much more than we ever thought that they could. The children have been able to be so free. I am getting to know the children better than I ever knew the children from the past because they only answered the answers I wanted them to give me. Now, I am seeing that there are so many possibilities that it is endless. There is so much more to teaching, and it is so much fun.

"Also, I think it is wonderful that these little ones are allowed to have this kind of environment...and that, with time, all children will be allowed to have more input on what they are going to learn. They are going to be using their own minds and making their own decisions because it is so important to make decisions at a young age and to learn that there is not just one way. There are many ways of doing things. We all have something to give, and even though we are all different, we all are good."

Has the training impacted others besides the participants?

Ms. Turner: "Yes, other teachers. [One] was very interested, and she saw the change in my kids the first year that I was in IDRA's [training]. She was asking me what I was doing differently. I explained about the program, and she was so interested that she wanted to join. Our kindergarten teachers...were very interested in what was going on because I always keep my doors open. They walk by and they see everything on a daily basis. They express an interest: 'Can you come and help? What am I doing wrong because it is not working? How can I set up my classroom so that it is developmentally appropriate?' And when the teachers ask I gladly offer my help. When they ask you because of the difference they have seen in your classroom, then it is easy to lend a helping hand and give advice because they know it works."

What Teachers - *continued on page 13*

What Teachers ... continued from page 12

What advice would you give other early childhood educators?

Ms. Trinidad: "To those childhood educators who have not gone through the training, they need to become aware of how this type of setting benefits the child and how you don't need the worksheets. They need to attend in-service workshops. I wish [Mr. Dominguez] could train the whole district."

Ms. Northrupe: "If they would have the opportunity to listen to someone like Mr. Dominguez tell them how free and how wonderful it is to allow the children to be free. How it will free *them* also and how it will make their teaching more exciting...they should listen and learn about it and try to understand this system. Visit classrooms where it is being implemented, even if they don't think they want to change. I didn't think I wanted to change. I thought I was doing the best I could do. I was convinced I couldn't do any better, but that was a mistake because there is always something you can try. You can never stop learning."

Reprinted with permission from the cartoonist, Joel Pett.

See Dick.
Dick is poor.
See Dick's grades. Also poor.
See Dick's family blame the school.
See the school blame Dick's family.
See Dick's future? Neither can Dick.

Reprinted with permission from the cartoonist, Joel Pett.

What was your most memorable moment?

Ms. Trinidad: "All of it in its entirety. But when we had that conference, what we were doing was recognized by others. I even had a letter sent to our superintendent by Dr. Villarreal [of IDRA]. So that in itself was something. I received some recognition. [I also liked] being able to get involved with other teachers from another district."

Ms. Turner: "When I was asked to share at the *Semana Del Niño* in April. I am not a public speaker and never felt I had anything to share with a group of teachers, but when [Mr. Dominguez] asked me to share at *Semana Del Niño*, I said, 'Wow!' That was like giving me a pat on the back. I do have something to share. After being in the program and implementing everything I learned, I felt, 'Yes I do have something to share.' As soon as he asked me, I said, 'I'll do it,' because I was excited about what I was doing. I knew it was working. I knew what I was doing before was not working, and I knew that there were still a lot of teachers doing the same thing. That was the most exciting time for me when I was able to share with others something that works."

Project Adelante *is designed to provide support services necessary for ensuring the quality instruction of preschool limited-English-proficient (LEP) children. It is funded by the Office for Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) of the U.S. Department of Education. Through* Project Adelante, *IDRA works to improve education in four critical areas: materials, teachers, administrators and parents. For more information, contact* Project Adelante's *project director, Abraham Dominguez, at 210/684-8180.*

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THE REGGIO EMILIA EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D.

Searching for new ways to improve education for all students has become an obsession for those educators who will not tolerate the dismal condition of education, particularly for language minority students. Dr. María Robledo Montecel, et al. cite statistics on Hispanic youth – a population that is expected to triple in the near future – that surprise many educators, "Dropout rates for Hispanic youth are the worst in the country, by any measure...In some cities, the annual dropout rate is as high as 50 percent" (1993).

Among the strategies formulated to address the failure of education to adequately prepare language minority students, early education plays a prominent role (Sosa, 1993). It has been the focus of attention at both the national and state levels. At the national level, policymakers saw the importance and urgency of addressing this need by having it as their Number One national goal. America 2000's first goal reads that, by the year 2000, "All children in America will start school ready to learn." This goal communicates an erroneous notion that children are not ready to learn or that the family context fails to nurture this natural curiosity for learning. Children are born with a curiosity and a thirst for learning. Dr. José A. Cárdenas and Blandina Cárdenas aptly state that it is when children reach the "halls of learning" that this thirst and interest in exploration and discovery begin to diminish (1977). Perhaps this goal should read: "All schools will be ready to educate children with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and needs."

Current research indicates, however, that programs of early education are also shortchanging minority students. The conclusions of an evaluation study of pre-kindergarten children conducted by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) reflect a national concern and support the notion that it is not the children who are not ready to learn, it is the inadequacy of the schools that impedes the success of the program (TEA, 1993). The study reveals that the following barriers continue to affect the quality of preschool programs in Texas:

- Although teachers appeared to have a basic understanding of how young children learn and the concept of developmentally appropriate practices, they continued to have difficulty translating this knowledge into classroom practices.
- Teachers did not understand or implement strategies best suited to facilitate language development of young children.
- The programs for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students continued to focus on moving children into English, rather than ensuring that children first had a strong foundation in their native language.
- Classrooms continued to mirror the environment of elementary classrooms rather than reflect the atmosphere of early childhood environments.
- Parents, though strongly supportive of kindergarten, did not appear to have a strong partnership with districts.

Dr. Lella Gandini

A few months ago, Dr. Lella Gandini led a two-day workshop for early childhood teachers sponsored by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), the Title VII Multifunctional Resource Center-Service Area 9 (MRC-9), Project ADELANTE, and Incarnate Word College. Dr. Gandini discussed the fundamental principles that guide the Reggio Emilia program in Italy. At this time, Dr. Gandini stressed that the goal of the program, as articulated by Dr. Loris Malaguzzi, its seminal thinker, is "to create an amiable school – that is, a school that is active, inventive, livable, documentable and communicative" (Malaguzzi, 1993). This program has received worldwide recognition for its success, and as Rebecca New states, in maximizing children's creative and intellectual potential without sacrificing their need for play and exploration (1990).

Reggio Emilia's success is evidenced by its 22 community preschools, 13 infant and toddler centers and a presence of church-affiliated preschool programs. Strong community support is generated by a belief that high-quality services for children of day care through preschool ages is beneficial to all – community, parents and children. This article summarizes fundamental principles discussed by Dr. Gandini as they are applied in the town of Reggio Emilia and suggests how some of these activities can be integrated into a bilingual early childhood program.

Principle 1: Early education is considered essential and receives support from the local community.

Early education in Reggio Emilia has full moral and financial support of city government. Not only is the city government involved in the selection of locales, it collaborates with religious group and national government efforts to promote educational opportunities for all children.

In the United States, the responsibility of early education has been centered on federal programs such as Head Start and state-mandated programs for specific student populations. Consequently, an array of programs with little or no ties to each other prevails in most communities. There is no collective effort to address the need for early education.

Communities should make it their business to facilitate the provision of early education for all of their population. Specifically, communities could learn from Reggio Emilia by doing the following:

- Fund efforts to promote collaboration among early education centers; and
- Form a community boards or committees to study early education needs, establish linkages among social service agencies and early education centers, propose policy that facilitates early education for all children, and form partnerships with the private sector to upgrade educational services to children.

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Principle 2: Children come to school ready to learn; they have a right to an education.

In Reggio Emilia, planning educational experiences is not based on children's needs. Instead, children are acknowledged for the diversity of experiences they bring from home. School is seen as the place where children begin to appreciate and engage in social interactions outside of the family context. As such, a school represents a microcosm of the community and its diversity. Children, on the other hand, learn to value diversity of cultures and languages represented in the classroom. Teachers focus on children's potential, and they provide a variety of experiences for children to construct their own learning. According to Gandini, "the curriculum is not established in advance...Teachers express general goals and make hypotheses about what direction the activities and project might take...Curriculum emerges in the process of each activity or project is flexibly adjusted accordingly" (1993).

In the United States, curriculum is based on the needs of children. Educational goals are established and become the benchmarks of success. Teachers measure the gap that exists between the skill of children and the educational goals and objectives. Because educational experiences are planned to close that gap, children are many times exposed to contrived learning experiences that limit their creativity and interest. Rarely, are children seen as possessing unlimited potential.

Suggestions for making learning a memorable and lasting experience in many of our schools include:

- Create opportunities for teachers and administrators to analyze the impact that a different paradigm can have on children's learning and on a nurturing environment;
- Establish goals and objectives that promote tapping on children's potential rather than on a set of prescribed skills and concepts; and
- Learn the power of the emergent curriculum and use it every time the opportunity arises.

Principle 3: Parents are an integral part of the educational process.

Gandini stresses the important role that parents play in children's educational process. Parents and teachers are partners who rely on each other to continuously nurture the children's learning and feel equally responsible for the education of children. Parents and teachers engage on day-to-day conversations that range from educational, social and emotional issues affecting children's learning to special events designed to extend the learning opportunities afforded to children. Parents are constantly visiting classrooms or meeting with teachers and administrators.

Teachers not only form partnerships with parents, they form partnerships with children. Gandini describes, "Teachers use the understanding they gain to act as a resource for the children...Teachers ask questions, discover the children's ideas, hypotheses and theories, and provide occasions for discovery and learning" (1993).

Current research confirms that our national goal of achieving a cooperating parent-teacher partnership is far from being accomplished. We continue to use different outreach strategies and many times face limited success. Many parents do not feel they are warmly welcomed; instead, they feel intimidated. Many of our administrators and teachers fail to see the wealth of information that parents bring about their children. This information can be very valuable in making curriculum and instructional decisions that affect their children.

To create these cooperating parent-teacher partnerships, it is necessary for schools to engage in these activities:

- Believe and trust parents who are seeking the best learning opportunities for their children;
- Create opportunities for parents and teachers to plan special educational events together;
- Involve parents in defining the curriculum and keep them continuously informed on the instructional process;
- Plan with parents how learning will be extended at home; and
- Picture each other as partners in learning.

Principle 4: Teachers belong to virtual teams; they have the support of other teachers and administrators in making educational decisions.

In Reggio Emilia, decisions that affect the quality of the educational experiences that will be provided to children are made by teams of teachers, administrators and parents who bring different expertise to the table. Many times these pro-active decisions require multifaceted approaches and a number of individuals to implement them. These decisions are supported by a series of activities that require a skillful orchestration of resources. Teachers never feel alone; instead, they feel supported and acknowledged.

In many cases, team decision-making is the exception rather than the rule in the United States. Teachers seek assistance from other teachers, administrators or counselors only when a difficult situation arises. Team planning is reactive and driven by problems with difficult solutions.

Suggestions to improve teacher efficacy include:

- Create virtual teams that are pro-active and plan educational experiences that have a positive impact on children; and
- Establish a planning system that monitors the effectiveness of the school as a learning center.

The Reggio Emilia program is based on cultural notions that differ somewhat from our own. Nevertheless, many of the principles that undergird the program have been alluded to in recent research on effective schooling in the United States. Work in the area of readiness by IDRA and others challenges practices and firmly-held beliefs regarding the education of young children. Instead of viewing readiness as an intrinsic, child characteristic that must be assessed to determine whether that child can benefit from certain school experiences, readiness is viewed as external to the child and tied to teacher beliefs. IDRA's Project AMANECER led this trend in the late 1970s with an innovative, child-centered curriculum for early childhood bilingual education that incorporates the language of a people, their culture, their values and their contributions to their children's learning (see Page 21).

Perhaps, the schools in Reggio Emilia have provided unique examples of how these effective practices can work in early childhood education. Rebecca New reminds us that "while some features described certainly reflect Italian cultural values, and, as such, might not be applicable to American programs, there are many lessons to be learned from the teachers and children of Reggio Emilia" (1990).

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COMING UP

In May, the *IDRA Newsletter* focuses on Action Research

SPOTLIGHT ON TECHNOLOGY

Appropriate uses of technology give us a new opportunity to provide excellent education for *all* children. With this opportunity, the learning process can be transformed so that students truly are the center of the learning process. Student needs, characteristics and cultural diversities can then become part of that center; classrooms can be places to learn, more than places to teach. Technology can also transform the way schools operate. Student progress can be assessed in new ways. Schools and families can communicate with each other more effectively. Programs can be evaluated quickly and accurately. IDRA is helping teachers and administrators design ways of utilizing emerging technology to make schools work for *all* children.

COMPUTERS ARE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN TOO

Bradley Scott, M.A.

Working to make all children ready for school by the year 2000 is a goal that has many meanings and implications. The discussions, as noted by IDRA before, have centered on historical concerns around readiness issues such as psychomotoric, cognitive and socio-emotional development and how to create meaningful education that addresses these concerns for children of the new millennium (Cortez, 1994). A new, and not so new, dimension is now clearly a part of the discussion. The dimension is technology, the medium is the computer, the setting is the classroom, and the level is preschool.

A new book, *Young Children: Active Learners in a Technological Age*, engages the discussion with a fairly comprehensive examination of many of the issues that abound in early childhood circles today (Wright and Shade, 1994). Its editors, June Wright and Daniel Shade, comment:

> The appropriateness of the computer in early childhood environments was not universally accepted in the 1980s and still is not in the 1990s. Knowing that young children construct knowledge through manipulating objects and moving space, early childhood educators were very skeptical of the value of computers for young children. Often-asked questions included, What will happen to children's development if symbolic representation takes place on a two dimensional medium – the computer screen? Other questions focused on how social relationships would be affected and whether emotional expression would be encouraged.

From cover to cover, the 21 contributors, who are also early childhood eductors and computer experts, discuss a wide range of issues. Part I, entitled "Young Children as Active Learners," presents discussions about young children and their involvement with microcomputers as a part of their learning endeavor. These lead the reader to consider that computers allow children to use their multiple intelligences in unique and beneficial ways; computers can contribute to children's acquisition of school-related skills under the right circumstances; and, when the software is technologically appropriate, children can manage computers in independently competent ways.

Part II, "The Role of Technology in the Early Childhood Curriculum," is a powerful tool for the practitioner. It provides the reader with a myriad of practical applications and "how-tos" for integrating computers into early childhood classrooms and programs. Chapter Six, in particular, offers a discussion of the potential of the microcomputer in the early childhood classroom. The authors offer five attitudes and assumptions about computers that, in their opinion, should permeate the early childhood program. I believe that one more assumption should have been added regarding microcomputers: Computers can be effective "levelers" regarding access to the curriculum for girls as well as boys and for culturally diverse students when proper planning and implementation occur.

Part III, "The Challenge for Early Childhood Educators," offers the reader precautions about computers and their use. Chapter 11 raises the issue of equity regarding computers. The discussions promote equality in gender, language, cultural and special needs. The authors caution the reader to consider that if these issues are not taken into account, it is quite possible that schools will continue to repeat the inequalities of the past. They offer two mandates that are worth repeating here:

1. Educators must support equity of access to technology for all children – for girls and boys, and for children of diverse backgrounds, needs, cultures and languages; and
2. Educators must strive to integrate technology in meaningful ways across curriculum areas for all learners.

Dr. José A. Cárdenas states that paradigm shifts will need to occur to produce equity in schools and classrooms regarding gender (1994). It appears that such shifts will need to occur in all matters of equity in schools and classrooms and at all levels to produce the kinds of new realities these authors suggest.

The final chapter of *Young Children: Active Learners in a Technological Age* states:

> While early childhood is, by its very nature, an exciting time, early childhood in the 21st century is likely to prove even more exciting because of the role that electronic media could play in the young child's development.

The chapter goes on to present some wonderful and exciting possibilities. As the chapter unfolds, the reader is drawn into a futuristic wonderland of potential regarding the use of interactive technology for the young child.

In addition, the appendices include a wealth of practical information on using computers to support thematic units, early childhood education and networking, software for young children, and helpful hints on acquiring hardware. The inclusion of a glossary of terms and an excellent resource bibliography round out what is truly a "must have" for every professional early childhood educator's library.

Resources

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Parents as First Teachers - continued from page 1

ness to receive input from the environment. This innate willingness to learn could be nourished or weakened by childhood experiences from the environment. Parents must be vigilant and expose their children to the "right experiences."

What Parents Should Do

- Turn as many everyday life experiences as possible into learning opportunities.
- Model learning from everyday experiences.
- Talk about the importance of learning as a self-initiated activity.

What Parents Should Avoid

- Interact with children only when they ask a question ("I don't have time to talk").

B. Children have a curiosity for learning.

Children test the world. When the child jumps from a chair the first time and finds out that it hurts, he or she has learned the consequences of such an act. The responsibility of the parent is to teach the child that risks need to be calculated. Killing curiosity for learning will have serious consequences later in life.

What Parents Should Do

- Take advantage of children's questions to extend learning.
- Capitalize on children's interest in selecting learning experiences.
- Plan the home physical environment with children's needs and desires in mind.
- Purchase toys that are specifically designed to stimulate children's thinking and creativity.

What Parents Should Avoid

- Leave children's learning to chance.
- Tell children you are too busy to answer their questions.

C. Children learn from their environment.

Children learn from all aspects of the environment (Greenman, 1988; Penny-Velázquez, 1993; Adame-Reyna, 1995). The environment is represented by people and objects that surround them. Every experience, whether it is a positive or negative experience, will teach children something.

Some experiences that can be used to teach new concepts and develop appropriate behaviors are the following: (1) child sees a mountain and asks about it; (2) child is involved in a fight with another child; (3) sister is reading a book and child sits next to her; (4) child receives a ball of clay; (5) child accompanies mommy to the doctor's office; and (6) child watches a cartoon on television.

What Parents Should Do

- Expose children to experiences that teach social, academic and motor skills.
- Capitalize on children's interest in selecting learning experiences.
- Allow children to actively interact with the environment – allow them to explore and ask questions.

What Parents Should Avoid

- Expose children to experiences that focus only on one set of skills.
- Expose children to experiences that only interest the parents.

D. Children thrive in an environment of love and respect.

Children need to feel secure in order to take risks and take advantage of a learning experience (Scott, 1992; González-Mena, 1991; Allen and Mason, 1989). Children are unique individuals whose feelings evolve from their experiences with other people and with the environment that surrounds them. These feelings form the basis for children's self-esteem – a love, an appreciation and an acknowledgment of one's uniqueness.

Feelings can facilitate or hinder learning. Feelings that facilitate learning are based on love and respect. Children who feel a sense of belonging and feel like worthwhile individuals who have unique qualities and characteristics experience love and respect. Parents have the responsibility to sustain an environment full of love and respect and to nourish children's self-esteem when confronted with a hostile or unfriendly environment (Bredekamp, 1987; Scott, 1992; Adame-Reyna, 1995).

What Parents Should Do

- Show love for all their children equally.
- Celebrate the uniqueness of each child.
- Respect children's views of the world.
- Ask and value children's opinion.
- Provide opportunities for children to excel and experience positive feelings about themselves.
- Model respect for other's beliefs and values.
- Expect children to respect other's beliefs and values.

What Parents Should Avoid

- Be partial to some of your children.
- Criticize children for their actions and behaviors.

Parents as First Teachers - continued on page 19

Contract with My Children

During the next six months, I (we) will try out the following five activities:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

I (we) will find out if I (we) have been successful if my children do the following:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____ _____

Parents as First Teachers Checklist

Rate each item according to the degree that it is practiced in your household. Place a checkmark in the appropriate column.

	Item	Always 1	Sometimes 2	Never 3
1.	I take advantage of as many learning opportunities for my children as possible.			
2.	I model by taking advantage of as many learning opportunities as possible.			
3.	I talk about the importance of learning from every experience with my children.			
4.	I take advantage of my children's questions by extending learning.			
5.	I capitalize on my children's interests in selecting learning experiences.			
6.	I plan my home physical environment with my children's needs and desires in mind.			
7.	I purchase toys that stimulate children's thinking skills.			
8.	I expose my children to experiences that develop social, academic and/or motor skills.			
9.	I respect my children's views of the world.			
10.	I ask children for their opinions.			
11.	I acknowledge my children's efforts.			
12.	I praise my children's accomplishments.			
13.	I model respect for other's beliefs and values.			
14.	I expect my children to respect others' beliefs and values.			
15.	I talk to my children as often as possible.			
16.	I engage in conversations and discussions with my children.			
17.	I ask for my children's views about certain topics.			
18.	I strive to increase my children's vocabularies in many different topics.			
19.	I provide opportunities for my children to express their ideas in different ways.			
20.	I model how ideas can be expressed in different ways.			
21.	I acknowledge my children's use of acceptable behavior.			
22.	I redirect my children's use of unacceptable behavior.			
23.	I provide opportunities for my children to appreciate art and music.			
24.	I probe to ensure that my children understand the importance of comprehending what is read.			
25.	I provide opportunities for children to select topics or books to be read.			
26.	I read to my children constantly.			
27.	I have print material available at home.			
28.	I read all labels and signs with my children.			
29.	I expose my children to classic literature.			
30.	I provide my children opportunities to use the different senses to learn.			
31.	I teach my children that some questions do not have a right answer.			
32.	I provide my children opportunities for problem solving using the different senses.			
33.	I provide my children opportunities to role play.			

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- Impose your will without an explanation for your action.
- Demean children because of their actions or beliefs.

E. Children have a potential for acquiring language.

Children learn from their parents or the persons with whom they live. Children have an innate capacity to process and use language (Sosa, 1993; Strickland, 1990; González-Mena, 1991). The process for learning a language is complex, requiring at least 12 years to formalize itself. In homes where the language is Spanish, children will become proficient in Spanish. If children live in an environment where a wide variety of languages are used, they will become very proficient in those languages. Parents, siblings and other adults who spend considerable time with the children become language models.

Parents should make sure that children are exposed to effective language users. Talking and reading with children develops their control of the language. Once children have mastered one language, they can learn a second one quickly. For example, children who have mastered the Spanish language well, have been exposed sufficiently to the English language at the appropriate time, and are not forced to learn the new language, can become proficient users of both Spanish and English. Parents should ensure that children are not prematurely forced to learn a new language.

What Parents Should Do

- Talk to children as often as possible.
- Engage children in conversations.
- Ask for their views about certain topics of interest.
- Increase children's vocabulary on different topics.

What Parents Should Avoid

- Use language to request children's compliance only.
- Criticize children for the way they say words or express themselves.
- Turn down an opportunity to explain or respond to a question.
- Expect children to listen passively.
- Dominate a conversation with children.

F. Children can communicate ideas in many different ways.

Children are versatile individuals who have learned to communicate ideas through language, behaviors and actions (Gandini, 1993; Greenman, 1988). Many have learned that they can communicate ideas on paper. That is, children have learned that people's scribbles communicate an idea. Children who are read to discover the excitement those scribbles represent. They begin to scribble themselves. Soon, their scribbling begins to communicate a feeling or an action. When asked, children will talk about the scribbling. Parents can help children master this form of communication by reading and providing them opportunities to scribble and talk about their masterpieces. Displaying their work guarantees acknowledgment of children's unique qualities and characteristics.

What Parents Should Do

- Provide opportunities for children to communicate ideas through speech or writing.
- Show children ways they can communicate ideas.
- Encourage children to use acceptable behavior.
- Redirect unacceptable behavior.
- Provide opportunities for children to appreciate art and music.

What Parents Should Avoid

- Criticize or demean cultures or languages that are different from theirs.
- Pressure children to react or respond in one specific way.
- Criticize children who use unacceptable behavior.

G. Children can acquire a love and desire for reading.

Reading is the most efficient way of acquiring information. Reading is a skill that children can develop from a very early age (Strickland, 1990; Greenman, 1988). Children who are exposed to print at a very early age tend to become better readers and learners when they go to school. They develop a thirst for information and knowledge. Parents can help their children by talking about the beauty of reading, by getting books for them to own, and by reading signs, labels and a range of items that have print on them.

What Parents Should Do

- Stress the importance of comprehending what is being read.
- Provide opportunities for children to select topics or books to read.
- Read to children starting at an early age.
- Have print materials (newspapers, books, letters, forms and in whatever language) at home at all times.
- Read all labels and signs to and with children.
- Expose children to different literature styles at an early age.

What Parents Should Avoid

- Ask children to conform with your selection of reading materials only.
- Force children to begin decoding works when they are not ready.
- Criticize children for not liking to read.
- Compare children to other children's accomplishments.

H. Children learn in different ways.

Adults and children use the senses to learn (Forman and Kuschrer, 1983). Some learn by seeing. Others learn by hearing, reading or touching. Some of us are better at learning by using one particular sense or another. For example, some of us can learn better if the reading is accompanied by pictures. Reading about how to put a model together may be sufficient for some. While other children may learn better if presented with a "hands on" activity. Parents should keep this information in mind and determine which is the preferred way of their children to learn. Provide more opportunities for children to learn in their preferred way.

What Parents Should Do

- Provide children opportunities to learn by using all the senses.
- Teach children that some questions do not have a right or wrong answer.
- Provide children opportunities for problem solving using the different senses.
- Provide children with opportunities to role play.

What Parents Should Avoid

- Teaching children to learn only by reading and memorizing materials.
- Teach children that one way of learning is better than another.

Task 2: Establish a Vision and Goals

A vision is a mental picture of an event that has not yet occurred. A mental picture allows us to define what children would be able to do within a period of time. Getting there does not happen automatically; parents have to make sure that support is available to help them to get to that point.

After hearing about a successful learner who entered school at age five, a parent decided to write down his vision for his three-year-old child. The vision went like this:

> My son will know about many things. He will be able to talk about them and express his desire to know more about certain things. He will not be afraid to

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ask if he is unsure of things. He will not be afraid of making mistakes. He will show respect and love for others and will always be happy. He will be highly dominant in Spanish, the language that we speak at home. He will be in the process of learning English in a meaningful manner and not feel frustrated or hurried to learn English immediately.

I challenge parents to do the same. Write or share with someone else a vision that will guide you and your children through the journey of childhood life.

The parent proceeded to write his goals in meeting this responsibility. Goals are like guideposts that define responsibility in making a vision a reality. His goals were:

- Strive to learn more about how children learn by reading articles, books or watching informational television programs.
- Take advantage of every opportunity to engage my children in learning.
- Create an environment at home that is conducive to learning.
- Instill in my children a desire for learning.

These goals served him and his children well. The parent planned activities to ensure that goals were met and the vision was realized.

Task 3: Reflect and Plan an Enriched Learning Home Environment

The third major task is to take stock, reflect and plan the improvement of the home learning environment. The chart on Page 18 provides a checklist with activities that promote a positive home learning environment. Parents can use this checklist to reflect on what has been occurring at home. All ratings of "never" or "sometimes" merit some attention by parents.

After using the checklist, parents may identify those activities that they propose to improve upon during the next six months. On this form, parents can write down their commitments to improve the learning environment. They can share this contract with their children and other adults and ask them to "check on them" periodically. They should post this contract on the refrigerator or a place where they will see it often. Repeat this process every six months.

Parents as effective teachers play several roles. First, they are good listeners. They listen to everything that children say, and they observe the environment that surrounds them. They respect what children have to say. There are no absurdities; whatever is said is said with a reason. Parents look for the message and question children when the message needs clarity. A good listener promotes the use of language by children. Children appreciate and are prompted to use language when they know that others listen and do not criticize them. One of the major responsibilities of a parent is to initiate conversations and take every opportunity for their children to use language.

Secondly, parents who are resourceful promote learning in many different ways. They have print available for children to see. They model the use of print to communicate ideas. A resourceful parent creates opportunities for learning.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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For more information, contact: Carol Chavez at 210/684-8180.

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Abelardo Villarreal is the director of the IDRA Division of Professional Development.

NUEVO AMANECER
An Early Childhood Education System

The NUEVO AMANECER (A Multicultural Action Network for Early Childhood Education Resources) name tells of a curriculum model that incorporates the language of a people, their culture, their values and their contributions to their children's learning.

Developed by IDRA as part of the Administration for Children's Head Start Strategy for Spanish-Speaking Children, NUEVO AMANECER is a process approach to learning that successfully combines the most appropriate elements of the theories of Piaget, Montessori and Maslow. It stresses the need for careful planning of the learning environment, while building parental involvement, teacher competencies, and program effectiveness.

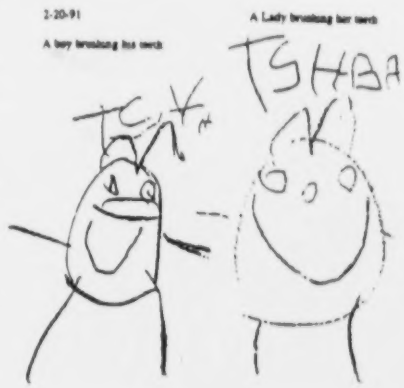
NUEVO AMANECER training is available from IDRA (210/684-8180); AMANECER publications – the 24 core curriculum books, daily lesson cards, idea file cards, language profile instrument, weekly planning guides and other materials – are available from NTC Publishing Group, 4255 West Touhy Avenue, Lincolnwood, Illinois 60646-1975.

Yo Escribo
Emergent Literacy for Young Writers

"Children are writing long before they come to school...on foggy car windows and wet beaches...on pavements and walls...with anything that leaves a mark." This simple observation is the guiding principle of *Yo Escribo*, an emergent literacy approach designed to foster language development in young children. *Yo Escribo* is a proven approach to developing limited-English-proficient (LEP) children's emergent literacy in an early childhood education setting. Using a series of in-class writer's workshops, *Yo Escribo* empowers and supports teachers to provide a literature-rich environment for pre-kindergarten to first-grade LEP students.

Key components of the *Yo Escribo* approach include:

- Reading children's literature every day.
- Modeling writing for children.
- Establishing a set routine for a "writers' workshop" in the classroom.
- Accepting children's choices.
- Encouraging children to talk about their work with other children.
- "Conferencing" with children one-on-one.
- Publishing children's work (making books that can be "read").
- Keeping folders on the "work in progress" as well as "published works" of children.
- Inviting children to do a "reading" of published works.



This set of materials consists of a 30-minute training video and a training guide (in English) that includes activities, transparencies and handout masters, and all other information one would need to conduct a training session for teachers, administrators and others involved in early childhood education.

For more information on Yo Escribo ($49.50) contact IDRA at 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228; 210/684-8180.

Guiding Success *...continued from page 4*

concepts that are associated with children's success in day care centers and preschool classrooms.

The goals of the training address four major areas: attitudes, expectations, knowledge and classroom practices. These goals are defined as follows:

- Develop positive attitudes that promote caregiver and teacher efficacy.
- Develop and nurture expectations that communicate belief in children and their abilities regardless of socio-economic status, physical or mental condition, gender, or religion.
- Develop concepts and skills that increase the teacher and caregivers' competency in interacting with children.
- Develop and expand the teacher and caregivers' knowledge base about child growth and development.

Each training session is three-hours and can be extended to provide time for teachers to begin to plan the implementation of new ideas or refine existing practices.

IDRA designs a comprehensive training package that includes training and technical assistance. The technical assistance is a critical component of the training package. Technical assistance includes classroom observations, modeling and coaching. IDRA staff have seen the transformations that teachers and caregivers make when provided the necessary administrative support, training and technical assistance. Staff have also observed and teachers have provided testimony on the decline in discipline problems and the increase in the children's engagement in the learning process, which confirms the success of the project.

Abraham Dominguez is an education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development. Dr. Abelardo Villarreal is the director of the IDRA Division of Professional Development.

More information on these workshops can be obtained by writing or calling IDRA at 210/684-8180.

RESOURCES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD

ADDITIONAL READINGS AND INFORMATION

BUT MOST URGENTLY AND IMPORTANTLY, IF WE WANT OUR CHILDREN TO GROW UP RESPECTING AND VALUING HUMAN LIFE, WE MUST BEGIN BY RESPECTING AND VALUING THEIRS BY MAKING THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS AND SCHOOLS ZONES OF SAFETY AND NURTURANCE AND SUPPORT.

- Marian Wright Edelman, in "Leave No Child Behind," Children's Defense Fund, 1992.

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Titles in bold are available from IDRA at no cost.
Contact IDRA's Communications Manager to obtain reprints. Thank you.

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM IDRA

The following publications are available from IDRA at the listed price; there is no additional charge for shipping and handling. Publication orders should be directed to Communications Manager, IDRA, 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228-1190. It is IDRA policy that all orders totaling less than $30 be pre-paid. Thank you.

HISPANIC FAMILIES AS VALUED PARTNERS: AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

by María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., Aurora Gallagher, Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed., Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D., Ninfa Adame-Reyna, M.S. and Josie D. Supik, M.A.

This publication explores the role of Hispanic families, particularly parents, in U.S. education. Through a presentation of facts about Hispanics in the United States and an honest discussion of Hispanic cultural values and mores, the authors dispel the myths that many educators have about their Hispanic students' families. Most importantly, the book focuses on the common ground shared by schools and Hispanic homes - most notably that education is important. It seeks to show administrators and teachers the value of family participation in education. Instructions and worksheets for implementing a parental involvement program tailored to the needs of Hispanic families and a comprehensive resources list are also provided.

90 Pages, Illustrated; $19.95

1993 First Edition; Quality Paperback/wire bound; ISBN 1-878550-47-0

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: A GENERATION OF ADVOCACY

by José A. Cárdenas, Ed.D.

This publication is a compilation of 92 articles on multicultural education published over a 25-year period. Dr. Cárdenas is the founder of IDRA, was its executive director for 20 years and now serves as director emeritus of the organization. This publication provides a historical overview of the author's involvement in the most significant issues in multicultural education as a teacher, administrator and an active advocate for children. It is being distributed by Allyn & Bacon as a reference textbook on this subject. The dates of various articles included in the textbook range from 1970 to 1992, though some of the material dates back to the middle 1960s. Articles are organized into 10 chapters dealing with each of 10 major issues in multicultural education: minority education, bilingual education, education of undocumented children, school dropouts, retentions in grade, early childhood education, science and technology, standardized testing, school reform and a new educational paradigm.

556 Pages; $38.00

1995; Hardback; ISBN 0-536-58760-4

SCHEDULE OF IDRA TRAINING AND WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

APRIL 1 - APRIL 30, 1995

This list includes activities that have been scheduled for particular school districts and other groups. They are not open to the public. For information on scheduling a similar event for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210-684-8180.

DATE	SCHOOL DISTRICT/AGENCY	TOPIC
Apr. 1	Donna Independent School District (ISD)	English as a Second Language (ESL) Strategies and Methodologies
Apr. 2	La Joya ISD	Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program (VYP) – Third Implementation Meeting
Apr. 3	IDRA Regional – Brownsville, Texas	Creating Effective Learning Centers in Early Childhood Education
Apr. 3-4	IDRA Regional – Dallas, Texas	WOW (Workshop on Workshops)
Apr. 4	El Paso ISD	Computer Workshop for HILT Teachers
	Multifunctional Resource Center (MRC) Regional – Corpus Christi, Texas	Implementing Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary or Transdisciplinary Curriculum Models in a Bilingual Classroom
	MRC Regional – Harlingen, Texas	Intergrating Active Learning Strategies to Enhance Second Language Acquisition at the Secondary Level
	MRC Regional – Midland, Texas	Using Action Research in the Bilingual Education and ESL Classroom
Apr. 5	MRC Regional – Del Rio, Texas	Creating Effective Learning Centers in the Bilingual and ESL Classroom
Apr. 5-6	Houston ISD	ESL Techniques
	San Antonio ISD	Technical Assistance on Finding Out/*Descubrimiento*
Apr. 7	Brownsville ISD	VYP – Mentor Meeting
	Weslaco ISD	Coca-Cola VYP – Observations and Case Studies
Apr. 7-8	El Paso ISD	Developmentally Appropriate Practices
	Goose Creek ISD	Transitioning and ESL Curriculum
Apr. 8	Brownsville ISD	VYP – Mentor and Tutor Meeting
	IDRA Regional – Austin, Texas	Creating Effective Learning Centers in Early Childhood Education
	Ector County ISD	Parent Training on Discipline
	San Antonio Association for Bilingual Education Conference	*Dicho y Hecho*/Language Play and the Arts
	Weslaco ISD	Coca-Cola VYP – Valley Youth Forum
	El Paso ISD	Math Training
Apr. 10	IDRA Regional – Austin, Texas	Creating Effective Learning Centers in Early Childhood Education
	IDRA Regional – San Antonio, Texas	Pathways Reading Strategies
	Marfa ISD	Coca-Cola VYP – Observations and Parent Training
	Texas Department of Human Services (TDHS) Victoria, Texas	Developmentally Appropriate Practices
Apr. 11	Corpus Christi ISD	Sheltered English Techniques
	Devine ISD	Parent Training Session
	Marfa ISD	Coca-Cola VYP – Tutor Training and Elementary Teacher Training
	McAllen ISD	Coca-Cola VYP – Teacher Training and Observations
	Northside ISD	Young Scientists Acquiring English (YSAE) Project
Apr. 12	La Joya ISD	Coca-Cola VYP – Elementary Teacher Training and Teacher Coordinator Meeting
	MRC Regional – Corpus Christi, Texas	Creating Effective Learning Centers in a Early Childhood Education
	MRC Regional – Corpus Christi, Texas	Using Portfolio for Assessing Student Performance in a Bilingual Education and ESL Classroom
	San Antonio ISD	YSAE Project
Apr. 13	Houston ISD	High Expectations
	San Antonio ISD	Classroom Visits
Apr. 17	Northside ISD	Integrating Authentic Assessment and Technology into Interdisciplinary Curricula
Apr. 18	Northside ISD	Classroom Visit
Apr. 19	Rio Grande City Consolidated ISD	Reading Project Orientation
	South San Antonio ISD	Parent Training – *Como Hacer a un Niño Lector*
Apr. 20-22	The Coca-Cola VYP Fifth Annual National Training Seminar and Valued Youth Conference	Valued Youth Program
Apr. 21	Houston ISD	Portfolio Assessment
Apr. 22	Corpus Christi, Texas	Family Culture and Individual Diversity – *Coastal Bend Area Project*
	Eagle Pass Rotary Club	Parent Training

SCHEDULE OF IDRA TRAINING AND WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

APRIL 1 - APRIL 30, 1995

DATE	SCHOOL DISTRICT/AGENCY	TOPIC
Apr. 24-25	*IDRA La Semana del Niño* Conference	Early Childhood Education
Apr. 25	Education Service Center – Region 18	Methodologies for Bilingual Education and ESL Education
Apr. 25-26	Rio Grande City CISD	Coca-Cola VYP – Case Studies, Observations and Technical Assistance
Apr. 27	Houston ISD	Parent Training
	La Joya ISD	Coca-Cola VYP – Final Observations
Apr. 28	Bilingual Education Conference	Alternative Assessment
	Houston ISD	Follow-up to Team Building
	MRC Regional – El Paso, Texas	Cooperative Learning Structures for the Paraprofessional in a Bilingual Education Classroom
Apr. 29	Donna ISD	Reading Comprehension

BORDER CHILDREN'S FUND ESTABLISHED

The Corporate Fund for Children has announced a national campaign to develop a fund for children's projects on the U.S.-Mexico border. The Intercultural Development Research Association is an *Amigo de los Niños* by helping to launch the fund.

The campaign for the Border Children's Fund will begin on May 5, in Austin, Texas, where hundreds of supporters are expected to attend the premiere of Francis Ford Coppola's *My Family*. The film traces the multi-generational story of the Sánchez family. It features outstanding Latino artists Edward James Olmos, Jimmy Smits and Esai Morales.

Two of the four border states, California and Texas, together have more than half of all Hispanic children in the United States. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 40 percent of Hispanic children are living in poverty, double the number for all other populations. A large number of these children live in El Paso, Eagle Pass, Del Rio, Brownsville, Laredo, or in one of 1,436 *colonias*. *Colonias* are unincorporated rural subdivisions that do not meet water, sewer, road, and other infrastructure requirements. The children in this area are the most at risk for loss of funding due to recent government budget cuts for food programs, child care, etc.; hence, the need to create a private fund.

The goal is to raise $1 million annually until the fund has $5 million. Half the funds raised annually will be distributed for matching grants. During the first three years, the fund will be restricted to the counties with the highest numbers of children in poverty. In the following years the fund will be expanded to include all of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and southern California.

For more information on the Border Children's Fund or to contribute, contact the Corporate Fund for Children, 1611 West Sixth Street, Austin, Texas 78703, 512/472-9971.

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